



**Parent
Organization
Network**
Leading School Change



2018 Annual Report

To Our Members

Program Highlights

In 2018 PON continued working to remove barriers hindering family engagement and build school staff's capacity to engage families. The following is a summary of this year's work:

Removing Barriers Hindering Family Engagement:

Conflict and Complaint Resolution

- Helped the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) develop a program to strengthen mediation skills for administrators resolving conflict between parents and principals.
- Legal partners challenged parent bans issued by schools in two U.S. District Courts. The case may be heard by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in 2019.
- A state audit concluded that the California Department of Education's (CDE) lack of oversight on the Uniform Complaint Procedure is leading to many unresolved complaints. PON and a broader coalition are developing recommendations to improve this system.

Volunteer Policies

- Due to parent leaders' advocacy, LAUSD is updating its volunteer policies to allow for maximum parent participation. The LAUSD Board already approved to pay for fingerprinting fees, and district staff has met with community organizations to remove other barriers for participation and establish clear guidelines for volunteer programs in schools.

Strengthening Family and Community Engagement Theory and Practice in Schools:

- *Professional Learning Network:* This year we collaborated with staff from four school districts to learn about engagement theory and practice, share strategies and resources, and reflect on the effectiveness of district systems and plans to engage families and community.
- *Evolving the Parent Engagement Local Indicator:* Together with CDE staff and others, we updated the tool that helps school districts reflect annually about their parent engagement plans and activities. The revised version of tool includes more guidance to improve practice. The tool will be introduced to the State Board of Education in March 2019.
- *State's Community Engagement Initiative:* A state coalition PON is a member of persuaded state lawmakers in allocating \$13.3 million dollars to build school staff and communities' capacity to engage and partner in school improvement efforts.

Looking Ahead

Next year we will begin new projects to help the state develop a system of support to equip school staff with effective family and community engagement practices in their pre-service, induction and/or in-service programs. We look forward to partnering with you in this process.

Sincerely,



Project Director

Introduction

This year PON continued working to remove barriers hindering family and community engagement and expanded our work to build school staff's capacity to engage families. To advance PON's work the Program Advisory Committee, which is composed of all active members and provides input on all the organization's programs, created a structure consisting of these committees: advocacy, monitoring implementation and impact, capacity building, growing & sustaining the network, and an ad hoc committee to form an advisory board in 2019. This report is organized by committee area.

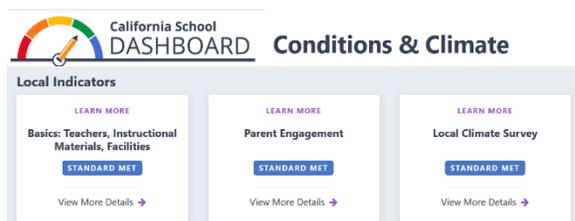
Advocacy

This section reports the progress or outcomes from advocacy projects led by PON. All advocacy projects must remove systemic barriers hindering engagement or help establish effective parent engagement in schools.

Strengthening Family and Community Engagement Practice

Governor Brown and the California State Legislature approved \$13.3 million dollars for a Community Engagement Initiative. The statewide LCFF coalition PON is a member of persuaded state leaders to approve \$13.3 million dollars, a one-time fund, for the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI). The CEI is a "multi-year effort under the state's new school accountability system that strives to build capacity in school communities, so they can facilitate difficult conversations and collaborate on solutions that lead to improved teaching and learning."¹ The fund will expand the number of Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) over the years. Given that PON is one of three organizations leading a PLN in the state on this topic, the learning from facilitating this group may influence the work of future PLNs.

CDE's "Ad Hoc Family Engagement Group" Evolved the Parent Engagement Local Indicator:



The workgroup drafted a new version of the parent engagement local indicator. Updating it was no easy task as school staff do not receive formal training about family engagement research and effective practices. Thus, the local indicator had to include both a training component and a reflection tool

school districts can use to measure growth and set goals for the following year. The revised version of the local indicator will be introduced to the State Board of Education in March 2019. Stakeholders must provide input before the updated local indicator is approved. With this task completed, the Ad Hoc Family Engagement Workgroup was dissolved given that the Community Engagement Initiative Consortium will be discussing similar issues in the future.

State's Teacher and Administrator Credentialing Requirements on Family Engagement: In November, PON partnered with Public Advocates to look at the issue of teacher and administrator credentialing requirements on family engagement. With the help of a volunteer, both organizations are researching how current professional standards address the issue of family engagement and if there are teacher preparation programs that provide formal training on this topic. The findings will be shared with decision makers in 2019.

¹ CCEE (2018). *Statewide Community Engagement Initiative to Help Districts and Communities Undertake School Improvement Work Together*. <https://www.ccee-ca.org/documents/CCEE-Press-Release-CEI.pdf>

Removing Barriers Hindering Family Engagement

Updating the Volunteer Policy in LAUSD: As the 2018-2019 school year started, PON received calls from leaders in the San Fernando Valley area reporting some of their schools had new principals that were requiring all persons to be fingerprinted before volunteering at the schools. The cost of fingerprinting is about \$57, and this is a barrier to engagement given that the district's student population is 85.9% low-income. Parents called their school board members, district staff, and nonprofit organizations to address the problem. **On November 13th, the LAUSD Board resolved to waive fingerprinting fees for parents and family members that want to volunteer and requested report to revise the volunteer policy.** PON, MALDEF, and Parent Pioneers researched volunteer policies from 10 school districts and developed policy recommendations that were shared with the district in December. The LAUSD Board will review and possibly approve the new policy in January 2019.

Volunteer Policy Recommendations:

- Develop a tier system to differentiate between volunteer positions that require fingerprinting and those that don't;
- Facilitate access for TB testing;
- Warn immigrant parents about the risks of submitting fingerprints to the Department of Justice and the FBI; and
- Provide training for volunteers and staff implementing the volunteer program to ensure uniformity across the district.

Increasing Parent Engagement in State Efforts to Improve Education

- **Parent Input on the Characteristics the Lead Agency should have to Implement the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI):** In July seven PON members attended a meeting to learn about the CEI and provide input on what type of background, skills, and abilities the Lead Agency should have. The collective input was included in CCEE's the Request for Proposal to select a Lead Agency.



- **CDE's Effort to Improve the "Uniform Complaint Procedure" (UCP):** This fall the CDE engaged stakeholders to improve the UCP through three meetings in October. This comes from a request from the California Legislature to respond to findings from the California State Auditor's January 2017 report on UCPs, which found that the process is not effective in resolving complaints. Although PON had three representatives at two of the meetings, few parents were at the meetings. PON is currently co-leading a coalition with the Legal Services of Northern California to coordinate efforts among legal and parent organizations to issue a comprehensive stakeholder report that would include recommendations for regulatory and legislative changes.

Key Issues with the UCP Process:

- Simplify the process and improving access for users;
- Address issues of timelines for investigation which create long delays in resolving complaints;
- Track data and reporting it;
- Provide training to districts to conduct thorough investigations;
- Improving enforcement by CDE; &
- Clarifying that administrative remedies under UCP is not required for parties to file a suit.

- **Collaborating with CCEE to Pilot Parent Training on LCFF, LCAP and the Dashboard:** In 2017 PON collaborated with CCEE to develop a toolkit to familiarize parents with the new accountability and system of support. This year the group piloted the toolkit with 300 persons, and PON reached 107 of them. The pilot showed mixed results about the effectiveness of the toolkit, so it was not released.

Increasing PON's Visibility to Build Credibility and Relationships

The Project Director spoke on family engagement and the education system at these events:

- **3/17/2018 | Annual Latinos In Action Women's Conference in Long Beach, CA:** Spoke on a panel discussing education and the new accountability system to about 300 women.
- **4/29/2018 | Annual California State PTA Convention in Ontario, CA:** Co-facilitated table discussions on PTA Parent Engagement Standards with about 50 parents.
- **5/2/2018 | Leadership Conference Education Fund's First Education Conference in Washington, DC:** Spoke on a panel regarding the parent advocate's roles in school improvement work. The workshop was attended by about 50 representatives from community based and advocacy organizations across the country.
- **9/8/2018 | 2018 Atlantic Rim Collaboratory (ARC) Pre-Summit Event hosted by the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson in Los Angeles:** Spoke on a panel for a session titled, "*Emerging California research that highlights ARC values of equity, excellence, wellbeing, inclusion, democracy, and human rights for all students*". The pre-summit event showcased the "California Way" and it was attended by at least 100 education leaders and practitioners; about ten were from Washington and Oregon, and about 40 were from other countries including: Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Mexico, Nova Scotia, Scotland, Sweden, and Wales.

Monitoring Implementation and Impact

This committee monitors the implementation of policies and training PON has advocated for in school districts and monitors growth and impact on student achievement over time.

Resolving Conflict Between School Staff and Parents in LAUSD:

In 2016 the PON released a report on LAUSD's issuance of 'Disruptive Person Letters' to parents, which bans parents from their children's schools without due process. In 2017, the district established an appeals process; tracks the number of letters issued; and the LAUSD Board passed a resolution titled "Increasing Trust and Strengthening Relations Between Schools and Parents" which required developing a pilot program to equip district administrators to mediate conflict between principals and parents. In 2018, an LAUSD committee composed of parents, nonprofits and staff developed the program that was piloted in June. The training is aligned with their districtwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Justice (RJ) initiatives.

8-hour Training on Conflict Resolution

- **Session I** – Aims to change mindsets about conflict and how to resolve it. It provides a theoretical foundation of human relations, how trauma impacts response to conflict, customer service, restorative justice and empathic listening.
- **Session II** – Is focused on practice with role plays, scenarios discussions, and seeing RJ harm circles demonstrations.
- The sessions are led by psychologists, social workers, and specialists on human relations and diversity, and restorative justice.

Implementation Schedule:

Spring 2018 - Trained South and West Local Districts staff that support principals.

Fall 2018 - Used the new approach when helping principals and parents resolve conflict

Spring 2019 - Use new approach when resolving conflict in all local districts.

Challenging Parent Bans from their Children's Schools in Court: In 2018 two lawsuits were filed to challenge the practice of banning parents from schools. The first case filed by the Tiffany Law Group was dismissed by the U.S. District Court in Southern California, and the decision is being appealed. MALDEF filed the suit in a U.S. District Court in Northern California. In May the court ruled that school officials cannot ban parents indefinitely from schools without due process. The case may be heard by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in 2019.

Building Staff Capacity to Engage through a Professional Learning Network (PLN): The PON PLN is composed of 13 participants from four school districts in Azusa, Lynwood, Pasadena, and Whittier that meet monthly. The purpose of the PLN is to build relationships to foster peer learning, building knowledge on family and community engagement theory and practice, and strengthen continuous improvement cycles. This process is to lead to high-impact plans and activities which build trust between parents and school staff, which then lead to collaboration to support student success and school improvement efforts.

Findings from the Evaluation (Pre and Post Survey and Interviews) for PLN Year 1 of 2:

- The PLN established relationships that led to peer-learning
- The PLN built knowledge on theoretical frameworks, but it did not impact practice yet
- The PLN participants identified these common strengths and challenges:

LCAP Stakeholder Engagement		Family Engagement	
Strengths	Challenges	Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of participants understand continuous improvement science. • The districts already engage diverse stakeholder groups in the LCAP. 	Communication about the LCAP within district level staff, among departments and school sites, and with the broader community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All value parents as partners • All have staff to support the work • All have strong programming for families • All have developed parent leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many don't have a shared vision on family engagement • There is little cross-collaboration between district staff • All need to build staff capacity to engage • Measuring the work
I will stop...	I will start...	I will stop...	I will start...
Focusing solely on giving information and more on collaborating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing community liaisons with training on LCAP topics • Work with principals on the LCAP • Increase frequency of LCAP reports 	Using participation numbers to measure engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning the parent work with district goals • Training staff on building relationships with families • Using different tools to measure the work

Key Learnings from our PLN Work Informing Future Strategies:

- School staff does not receive training on family and community engagement during their pre-service, induction, or in-service programs. This leads to:
 - Investing in training for families but very little, if any, for staff.
 - Not prioritizing family engagement and hindering collaborating with others as most staff is unaware of the research and/or don't believe all parents can support learning.
 - Family engagement staff learn about the research on their own through CDE publications, by implementing activities through the years, and with some support from the county, thus PLNs are helpful.
- To improve education systems and outcomes building staff capacity to engage is a must.

Next Steps for 2019:

- Ensure the PLN's second year strengthens practice by applying the concepts;
- Refine our approach to build school district capacity to engage families; and
- Develop a strategy to identify "bright spots" or schools that engage families well, or partner with schools to work together in developing such models.

Capacity Building

PON develops tools, training, and resources to orient, update, and continuously develop staff, parent leaders, and partners so they can engage with staff in schools and lead PON projects. In 2018 we led the following projects:

Updating Staff's Knowledge of Family and Community Engagement Theoretical Frameworks and Effective Practices & Building a Virtual Library: To succeed in meeting the needs of PLN participants PON invested in staff development, research and curriculum development, and evaluation. Consequently, the Project Director participated in a Harvard Graduate School of Education Family Engagement Institute and three PLN members, including the PON Project Director, attended the Annual Family & Community Engagement Conference. With the resources gathered they built a library. To view and download resources, click on this link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bB9LMUiLiyJhFKHowmvBeNrUC6W9hzTn?usp=>. To add resources to the collection, please e-mail us at asimeon@parentnetwork-la.org.



Developing a Self-Assessment to Determine Collective Capacity Building Skills: Every person has skills, abilities and experiences that can be used to help others and the community. This year the Capacity Building Committee led by Maria Rosales from PROedu, developed a tool to inventory member's strengths and skills, and identify areas we need to continue developing in 2019, including updating the PON members on the knowledge gained at this year's conferences.

Growing & Sustaining the Network

Every year PON carries out activities to engage the members in assessing the community's needs; strengthen relationships and improve communication among members; promote the members' campaigns and initiatives; and recruit new members. This year we led these activities:

Events Co-Hosted with Members

*Latinos In Action
Annual Women's
Conference*



The conference featured education panels, workshops and campaigns. It reached about 300 women in Long Beach, CA.

*Resilient Parents, Strong Families
Event Co-Hosted with El Concilio de
Padres de Highland Park*



Forty parents learned about resilience, the ability to exercise flexibility and develop inner strength to overcome life's challenges. They shared how they became resilient.

*Informed Parents, Stronger
Families & Schools Event Co-
Hosted with Gente Organizada*



In this session 24 participants learned and discussed examples of 3 school district's LCAP stakeholder engagement process & improvement efforts.

Committee Structure and Commitment Statements: To integrate the membership’s talents into PON’s projects members developed a committee structure and commitment statements. Now each individual or organizational member signs a formal agreement to join PON and determines which committee they want to participate in.

This year the “Growing and Sustaining Network Committee” led by Marvin Andrade from Asian Americans Advancing Justice – LA, completed the following projects:

- Updated PON’s website to include members’ organizational logos and developed a shared calendar for the network to post upcoming events.
- Reviewed tools and assessed member needs and communication behavior patterns in order to determine next steps to improve communication among members. It was recommended for all members to first establish using e-mail as part of the network’s culture before investing in technology. PON members agreed to get on email in 2019.

Priorities for 2019



State Advocacy	Monitoring Impact & Capacity Building	Grow & Sustain Network	Strengthen Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence decisions thru committees in SBE, CDE, and CCEE • Influence effort to reform the CDE’s Uniform Complaint Process • Engage the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to update family engagement requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build school staff capacity to engage families and the community • Influence effort to update LAUSD’s volunteer policies • Develop strategies to identify schools with model family engagement practices • Train members on the family engagement research and develop a team to facilitate PLNs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update members’ demographic information • Host four networking meetings • Develop orientation for new members • Co-host events and sponsor projects that will strengthen PON leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Advisory Board • Advance PON’s through these committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program Advisory Committee - Ad Hoc to Select Advisory Board - Advocacy - Capacity Building - Monitoring Impact - Growing Network • Continue fund raising